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Infantry outposts: detailed instruction in outpost ...

William Drury Shaw

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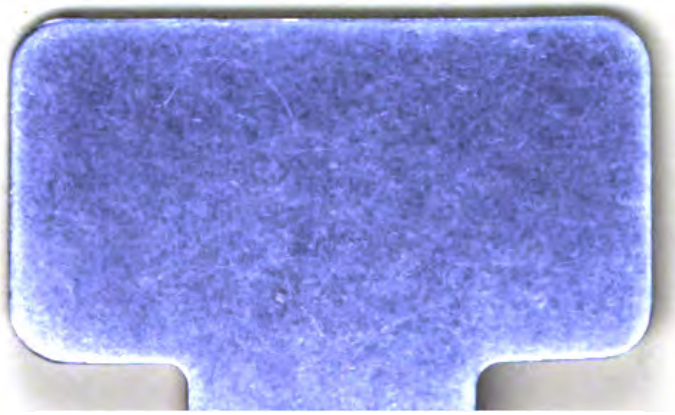

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INFANTRY OUTPOSTS:

BEING

DETAILED INSTRUCTION IN OUTPOST DUTY,

ON THE SYSTEM LAID DOWN IN THE 'FIELD EXERCISE.'

BY

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THE ROYAL SCOTS;

ADJUTANT 1ST MIDLOTHIAN RIFLE VOLUNTEERS.

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PREFACE.

THIS little work is published in the hope that it may be of some service to Captains, now that the military training of their men is left in their hands.

The Author's recent experience in the Auxiliary Forces also has convinced him that if these important duties are to be successfully practised, both officers and non-commissioned officers must make themselves theoretically acquainted with the subject beforehand, owing to the short time available for actual practice, which would be wasted were detailed explanations attempted on the parade-ground.

The author found the following plan of instruction very successful when adjutant of his regiment eleven years ago.

The subject-matter was communicated to the men in the form of a lecture, copies of which were distributed among the officers and non-commissioned officers, while the orders and

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instructions for sentries (to be found at the end of the book) were posted up in the men's barrack-rooms.

While strictly adhering to the system laid down in the 'Field Exercise,' the matter is explained much more in detail, and step by step in a manner suited to the instruction of young officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, for whom this work is primarily intended, and for which reason no attempt has been made to deal with what may be termed the higher branches of the subject, such as combination of the three arms on outpost duty, &c., while such portions of a system of outposts as the reserve have been treated very briefly, as coming more within the province of officers of superior rank.

EDINBURGH, 1*st May*, 1884.

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INFANTRY OUTPOSTS.

General principles.

No force can take the field without providing for its safety from surprise and ensuring sufficient warning from attack to enable its commander to make his dispositions for successfully resisting such attack.

While on the march, the precautions necessary for this purpose take the form of advanced and rear guards and flanking parties. When encamped the term outposts is applied to them.

It is seldom necessary for a force encamped to completely surround itself with outposts, it being usually sufficient, particularly when the opposing forces are large, to establish the outposts in front (*i.e.*, the direction of the enemy) and toward the flanks. In this case a system of outposts may be likened to an open fan, the main body being represented by the point on which the fan opens and the outer edge of the fan representing the outside line of sentries.

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A system of outposts consists of three lines of resistance—viz.:

Picquets, with their outlying sentries;
Supports;
and Reserve.

The proportion of a force employed on outpost duty is usually not more than one-sixth—in other words, men should get at least five days off for one on this harrassing duty.

It should be borne in mind that outposts watch that the main body may rest—one of the maxims of war being to ensure to that portion of a force not actually employed the greatest possible amount of rest. The repose so necessary to enable an army to endure the fatigues of a campaign can only be obtained by the knowledge that an efficient system of outposts is established between it and the enemy—hence the great importance of thorough training in these duties in time of peace. Starting from the main body, the first of the three divisions of the outposts or lines of resistance is the reserve. It often consists of the three arms; its relative strength to the more outlying portions is as two to one—that is, it usually comprises about two-thirds of the force told off for outpost duty. Its distance from the main body (as also that of the more outlying portions)

The reserve.

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depends upon the nature of the ground and the proximity or otherwise of the enemy. For instance, with an active enemy within striking distance, it is necessary to throw forward the whole system of outposts sufficiently in advance to ensure time being given, in event of attack, for the main body to form up. On the other hand, when the enemy is known to be distant, and the duties of the outposts become more those of police, they may safely be drawn closer in, thus saving fatigue to the troops employed. Speaking generally, the distance of the reserve from the main body may be put between one and four miles. Its position is selected by the commander of the outposts, whose headquarters are with it. A good position is one from which several roads radiate to the front, as this enables support to be more easily sent to the outlying portions, while it facilitates the retreat of the latter on the reserve when driven in. The reserve may occasionally, where the configuration of the ground specially warrants such a step, be divided into two portions. Where the whole force in the field is not large, a reserve is often dispensed with, supports and picquets alone being furnished. For purposes of parade, it is usual merely to mark the position of the reserve.

Leaving the reserve, the next line of resist- Supports.

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ance is formed by the supports. The total strength of the supports should not be less than that of the picquets, although one support is usually sufficient for a group of picquets. A support should never consist of less than one complete company, but may consist of more. The exact positions of the supports cannot be finally determined until those of the picquets with which they are associated are fixed upon, but the general line of supports is usually about half a mile in advance of the reserve.

Day duties.

As the dispositions of troops on outpost duty differ materially by day and night, day duties will first be described, and it will be convenient to start from the reserve in the formation recommended in the 'Field Exercise,' viz., by half battalions, under the command of field officers. These would commence to radiate towards the front immediately upon leaving the reserve, in directions pointed out by the commander of the outposts, and the advance, if not covered by cavalry, would be preceded by scouts. Accompanying one half-battalion to the front on arriving at what will be the general line of supports, it will be halted, the two companies which are to be in support being placed for the present in what is considered will be approximately their positions, and as guards under sentries; the field officer will next point out

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Day duties.

Picquets and sentries.

to each of the captains of the two companies that are to furnish the picquets—

(*a*) The extent of front to be covered by his sentries.

(*b*) The general line upon which they are to be posted (usually some marked natural feature, such as the crest of a hill, or the line of a river, road, or wood).

As soon as he receives this information, the captain will advance his company in the direction of the centre of the front allotted to him to protect, and will extend what he considers a sufficient portion of the company to cover such front. These men he will send forward under a subaltern, with instructions that they are to halt and get under cover upon reaching the position selected for the general line of sentries. During this advance the subaltern can increase or decrease the intervals between files to ensure the party fitting in to the portion of ground allotted to the company to protect. He should also caution the men that upon being ordered to halt they must conform to the sinuosities of the ground, taking care to get into positions from which they can see to the front.

[It may here be mentioned that secrecy and concealment of our own movements from the enemy is one of the essentials of outpost duty.

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Day duties.

Picquets and sentries.

It must therefore be impressed upon all ranks that, while seeing as much as they can, they should expose themselves to view as little as possible. For this reason it is better by day and on light nights for men to move with rifles at the trail. Bayonets are only fixed on dark nights; then the rifles are necessarily carried at the slope.]

Just as the position of the support is dependent upon that of the picquets, so also the exact position of the picquets can only be determined after the sentries are posted. Speaking generally, the line of picquets is about one quarter of a mile in advance of the supports, and the same distance in rear of the line of sentries. On covering, therefore, about half the distance between the support and the ground pointed out for his sentries, the captain will halt the unextended portion of his company, and place it temporarily in some suitable central spot out of sight of the enemy and as a guard under sentries, and handing it over to the next senior, will proceed himself, accompanied by a non-commissioned officer, to post his sentries. Having already a portion of his company extended in front, he requires to take no men with him, as he selects the sentries from the extended line, sending such files as are not required back to the picquet.

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[Sentries of the outer line, whether by day or night, are always double—*i.e.*, consist of two men.] The captain, therefore, proceeds by the shortest cut to one flank of his extended line, and the subaltern who accompanied it joins him there.

Day duties.

Posting sentries.

Now in posting day sentries there are two conditions to be fulfilled: 1st. "*That the whole of the ground is to be properly protected by your sentries*"—that is, that they are to be so posted that no one can pass between any two without being seen by one or the other, the same connection being kept up between your flank sentries and those of the picquets next on your right and left. 2nd. "*That in carrying out condition No.* 1, *you employ as few men as possible*"—taking care, however, not to go to the other extreme and put them too far apart: under ordinary circumstances half a mile should be the maximum distance between any two day sentries. Bearing these two conditions in mind, the captain will proceed to post his sentries, taking such files of the extended line as may be nearest to the places he selects, and sending the others, as he passes them, back to the picquet. When posting a sentry the officer should place himself in the exact position he intends the sentry to occupy, as thus alone can he be certain that the position is suitable,

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Day duties.

Posting sentries.

ground being most deceptive, and what appears from a little distance to be a likely position often proves to have some obstacle to view not before apparent. When he posts each sentry the captain should give him his orders and point out the position of the picquet. [Orders for sentries (day and night), together with general instructions for sentries, will be found at the end of the book.] Officers commanding picquets at either end of the line of outposts must be careful to throw back the sentries on the exposed flank, and, when not strengthened by some natural feature, to support it with a detached party to prevent its being turned. Having posted his sentries to his satisfaction, the captain will return to his picquet and proceed first to select a suitable position for it, and then to tell off the different reliefs and parties; before, however, detailing how this is done, notice will be taken of a circumstance of frequent occurrence that might affect the posting of the sentries. This circumstance is the existence of cover (such as a wood) or commanding ground in uncomfortable proximity to your line of sentries, which might conceal an enemy, and from which your sentries might be picked off or a rush made on your position. There are three ways of dealing with such objectionable cover:—

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Day duties.

1st. Enclose it within your line of sentries.

Posting sentries.

2nd. Throw back your line of sentries so as to leave a safe margin of open ground between it and them.

3rd. When the cover is too extensive to enclose, and when owing to the nature of the ground, or your orders, you cannot withdraw to safe distance from it, then post your sentries as if the cover did not exist; but in this case you must occupy it with a detached party.

If any roads lead into the position from the front, the captain will decide (or be instructed by the commander of the outposts) which are to be kept open to any one wanting to pass in (such as peasants with provisions, flags of truce, &c.), and he must so arrange his sentries as to have one on each road left open, or in close proximity to it. The position of these roads must be pointed out to all the sentries and orders given that all other roads or paths leading in are to be considered closed.

Position of picquet.

Having posted his sentries to his satisfaction, the company commander next proceeds to determine the position of his picquet. If the line of sentries is very extended, he may find it convenient to divide the company into two or more small picquets, but if not too extended it is certainly advantageous to keep the company

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Day duties.

Position of picquets.

as much together as possible, merely detaching the reliefs of any sentry in an inaccessible position, which would be posted near to such sentry. Whichever course is adopted, the following general rules apply:—

The best position for a picquet is one from which all the sentries that it supplies can be seen; it should be about ¼ mile in rear of and centrally situated with regard to them, and concealed from view of the enemy. If any of the sentries cannot be seen from the picquet, a connecting sentry (single) who can see both must be posted between such sentry and the picquet: a connecting sentry must also be placed between the picquet and the next picquet on the right. The sentry over the arms of the picquet should thus be able at once to report any signal made by the outlying sentries.

Telling-off the picquet.

Having determined the position of his picquet, the next thing is to tell it off. To do this, the commander must first consider what men he has already out; in this case, say,

3 double sentries in outer line,

and 3 single sentries, viz.,
- 1 between picquet and a sentry not visible from it.
- 1 between picquet and next picquet on right.
- 1 over the arms.

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Day duties.

The commander then proceeds as follows :—

Telling-off the picquet.

The company being formed up in two ranks, each party as it is told off is marched or closed a few paces to a flank, so as to leave intervals between the different parties, in order that the parading of one may not necessitate the falling in and unpiling of arms by the remainder.

The 3 files on the right are then told off, under a non-commissioned officer, as 2nd relief for the double sentries.

The next 3 files, with a non-commissioned officer, are similarly moved to a flank as 3rd relief of ditto.

Next 3 men are told off as 2nd relief for the 3 single sentries.

And 3 more men as 3rd relief for ditto.

(Of course a man must be added to each of these two last parties for every additional connecting sentry found necessary.)

Next, if required, a detached party of, say, 1 non-commissioned officer and 12 men, to occupy the "cover" above mentioned. The instructions for this party will be given later on.

Two men and a non-commissioned officer will then be told off as visiting rounds, and two more and a non-commissioned officer as relief for same (usually sufficient, as the duty is not so onerous to require a third relief).

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Day duties.

Telling-off the picquet.

As many patrols of 3 men each can then be told off as may be considered necessary; by day it is usually sufficient to have one patrol out at a time, but at least one relief should be provided.

The remainder of the picquet can be employed on camp fatigue duties, such as collecting wood, drawing water, &c. In addition to the above-mentioned parties, there is another necessitated by any road leading in from the front which it has been decided to keep open; this is called an examining party, and consists of a non-commissioned officer and 4 men, but as they furnish the reliefs of the sentry on the road in question, they are taken from the 2nd and 3rd reliefs of sentries first told off—2 men from each.

Examining party.

The non-commissioned officer in charge of the examining party will be instructed to place his men in a suitable position a little in rear of the sentry on the road, whom he will relieve at the same hours as the other sentries; he will receive special instructions as to how to deal with persons wanting to pass in, flags of truce, &c.

(The reliefs of any sentry posted in an inaccessible position or inconveniently distant from the picquet can, at the discretion of the commander, be similarly posted close to the sentry.)

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Day duties.

Detached party.

The non-commissioned officer in charge of a detached party sent to occupy a wood or cover in front of the line of sentries must proceed cautiously, preceded by scouts; he should keep one or more patrols, according to the strength of his party, continually on the move searching thoroughly the wood or cover to prevent the enemy from occupying it without his knowledge; and he should be instructed to occasionally alter the position of his party, and take every other precaution to guard against its surprise and capture; he should send in word to the picquet commander of anything important that may come to his knowledge. These parties should take their supplies with them, as they usually remain out until the picquet is relieved; it is also a good plan to arrange that they send in a report at certain intervals whether anything unusual has occurred or not, to assure the picquet commander of their safety and vigilance.

Patrols.

Patrols usually consist of 3 men, selected for their intelligence, as they are frequently sent out unaccompanied by an officer or non-commissioned officer; they may be sent either with a specified object, such as to ascertain whether a certain village, wood, &c., is occupied by the enemy, or if there are any signs of his advancing by a certain road, or they

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Day duties.

Patrols.

may be sent out from one flank of a line of picquet sentries to examine the country in front, and return by the other flank: however employed, the duty is one of danger, and therefore the greatest caution is necessary, and it must be impressed upon the men that their object is to effect the purpose for which they are sent out without discovering themselves to the enemy.

The picquet commander having told off his picquet as above described, can pile arms and allow the men to fall out, cautioning them to remain in the immediate vicinity.

Sketch of the ground, &c.

The commander should then make a rough sketch of his positions, showing the posts of the different sentries and parties for the information of the commander of the outposts, should it be required; he should also select the best positions for resisting an attack, and determine how he would proceed in case of attack from any probable direction; he could also, if desirable, artificially strengthen any special point, such as a bridge, &c., but must be careful not to erect anything so permanent as to impede the advance of the force he is covering.

Relief of sentries.

Sentries are relieved every two hours, unless special orders are issued to relieve them oftener. [When practising outpost duties and the time

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Day duties.

Relief of sentries.

is limited, they can be relieved as often as the commanding officer thinks fit. A good plan is to sound a G on the bugle when the reliefs are to take place.] The following will be found an excellent plan for relieving day sentries on outpost duty where secrecy is an object, in place of the processional movement as practised on guard.

The relief having been ordered to unpile arms and fall in in front of the picquet, is carefully inspected, ammunition looked to, &c.

To each file is then pointed out the position of the sentry they are to relieve (or when not visible, that of the connecting sentry, who in turn passes them on). The command is then given—To your posts, Quick March, when each file will proceed by the shortest road and await the arrival of the officer or non-commissioned officer who paraded the relief, and who will immediately afterwards proceed to visit each sentry. Starting from one flank, he will make the old sentry hand over his orders correctly to the new one, and then direct the former to rejoin the picquet. Before the arrival of the officer, the old sentry should communicate to the new anything of importance that he may have observed (such as the appearance of smoke in some distant wood, which would suggest its being occupied by the enemy, &c.); he would

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Day duties.

Relief of sentries.

also point out places to be specially watched, the positions of the sentries on the right and left, the roads occupied by examining parties, &c.

Visiting rounds or visiting patrols.

Visiting rounds consist of an officer (or a non-commissioned officer), accompanied by 2 privates. They are sent round by the commander of a picquet, at least once between each relief, to visit the sentries and ascertain that they are on the alert and acquainted with their orders.

Visiting rounds proceed a little in rear of a line of sentries and take over the orders as quietly as possible. Porting arms and other formalities are usually dispensed with on outpost duty, particularly by day.

Although every man should be perfectly familiar with the whole of the orders and instructions for sentries (to be found at the end), the following will usually be sufficient to repeat at each relief or visit of rounds by day sentries, with any addition suggested by the nature of a particular post:—

1. Allow no one to pass through the line of sentries except by the roads pointed out.

2. Communicate anything unusual to the conmander of the picquet.

Supports.

The positions of the picquets having been settled, those of the supports can now be finally determined upon.

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Day duties.

Supports.

Generally speaking, they would be about a quarter of a mile in rear of the line of picquets, and centrally situated with regard to those picquets with which they are associated.

The field officer commanding the half-battalion will select the most suitable positions, and decide whether the two companies are to be posted together or separately.

The exact position having been determined (which should at once be pointed out to the picquet commanders), the commander of the support will post connecting sentries (single) between it and each picquet with which it is associated, and between it and the support next on the right; also a sentry over the arms; and having told off the usual reliefs for these sentries in the manner described for a picquet, can pile arms and allow the men to fall out.

Owing to the comparatively small number of duties furnished by the support, it is often advisable that it, instead of the picquet, should supply any detached party or reconnoitring patrol, but this is a matter to be decided on the spot by the senior officer. It was considered better to describe their duties, which are the same in either case, under the head of picquets.

Attack on day outposts.

It is impossible to lay down detailed instructions as to how day outposts act when attacked

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Day duties.

Attack on day outposts.

owing to the ever-varying circumstances, but presumably the commander of the outposts will have issued special orders on this head framed upon his knowledge of the ground and his plans with reference to the reserve. In the absence, however, of special instructions, the following general rules may be applied.

The instructions for sentries describe how a sentry would act when certain that the enemy was advancing to the attack—he would fire to alarm those in rear, and would send back his comrade to the picquet with particulars as to direction of attack, probable numbers, &c.

The commander of the picquet having satisfied himself that the enemy is really advancing, would at once send word back to the support and extend his picquet on the best ground for resisting the attack; this would usually be on the line of sentries, but if in rear of it the sentries would fall back on the extended picquet when pressed. [In the absence of special instructions, picquet commanders must never omit to arrange beforehand with the commanders of neighbouring picquets and supports their plans for resisting attack to ensure united action and mutual support.] The commander of the support would in the meantime have sent back warning to the reserve (or main body should there be no reserve) and have

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Day duties.

Attack on day outposts.

extended his support in the most advantageous ground (previously selected) in the vicinity of his post. Both commander of picquet and support must bear in mind that their duty is to delay as long as possible the advance of the enemy, to enable the commander of the force to make his dispositions for meeting the attack. With this object they must, when forced back, dispute every foot of ground, and take advantage of good positions for making a stand.

If the advance of the enemy is in force with the object of bringing on a general action, the most the outposts can do is to delay such advance; and picquet commanders must, while offering as much resistance as is consistent with their safety, guard against being cut off or committing the commander of the main body to giving battle in a position not of his own choosing. When the advance is of this nature, the commander of the support would do well to remain in his good defensive position where he originally extended, and allow the picquet, when driven in, to pass through, and in turn take up a position in rear—in fact the defence would resolve itself into skirmishers slowly retiring by alternate parties.

If, however, the advance of the enemy, although in considerable force, is found to be not general, but with a view of driving in our

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Day duties.

Attack on day outposts.

outposts for the purpose of executing a reconnaissance of our position and camp in rear, then it is the duty of the commander of the outposts to endeavour to defeat such object, which would be best effected by the supports being sent forward to reinforce the picquets and further support being drawn from the reserve (or main body), as a determined resistance would probably result in the abandonment of the attack by the enemy.

NIGHT DUTIES.

Night duties.

There are in existence two systems of night outposts:—

(*a*) The "Cordon" system, where a complete chain of double sentries is established in front of the picquets.

(*b*) The "Patrol" system, where patrols are employed to watch the ground in lieu of sentries.

In the English army a combination of these two systems obtains—sentries being posted on the roads and avenues of approach leading in from the front, and the ground between the sentries being watched by patrolling.

It may, however, frequently happen (as on

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Night duties.

the sandy plains of India or Egypt *) that the whole country round a camp forms an avenue of approach, in which case it is necessary for safety to adopt the "Cordon" system. For purposes of practice (particularly when open ground is available), it is better to confine attention *at first* to the "Cordon" system, for two reasons—

Cordon system.

1st. Because it employs a large number of men *as sentries*, thus affording more opportunity for all practising challenging, and enables the relieving, &c., to be carried out under the eye of the instructor.

2nd. Because the other system being but a modification of it, any person acquainted with it would have no difficulty in adopting the other.

The "Cordon" system will therefore be described first. On arriving on the ground † the general line of sentries and extent of front to be watched by each company will be pointed

* Assuming, of course, that the enemy is civilised and provided with arms of precision—just as we modify our tactics when fighting savages, so must we modify our outposts, such simple expedients as a cactus hedge or a fence of thorns being found sometimes far better protection than the most elaborate system of outposts.

† The steps preceding the arrival of the picquet on its ground have already been described under day duties, and apply equally to night, except that no portion of the picquet is extended by night.

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Night duties.

Cordon system.

out to its commander, who, after placing a sentry in front and one on each flank of the company for its immediate protection, will proceed to post his sentries, being careful first to communicate the "countersign" to the company.

[Usually night picquets have been employed on the same ground during the day on outpost duty, or if taking up fresh positions they do so while there is sufficient light for the operation to be covered by vedettes or scouts in front, which would be arranged for by the commander of the outposts. When, as may occasionally happen, companies arrive on new ground *after dark*, the greatest caution is necessary until the sentries and patrols are established.]

Taking a sufficient number of files with him, the commander will start from one flank of the front; he is to watch and drop a double sentry at intervals of about 50 yards (not less), taking care that every road leading in from the front has a sentry on it. The captain should be accompanied by a subaltern and one or more non-commissioned officers, so that the positions of the sentries may be familiar to them when they afterwards proceed in charge of reliefs, &c.

When posting sentries, an officer will be careful to point out to each—

(*a*) The front of his post (viz. direction of the enemy).

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Night duties.

Cordon system.

(*b*) The position of the sentry next on his right.

(*c*) The position of the picquet (on a dark night this may be indicated by placing a row of stones pointing in the direction; if the position of a picquet is afterwards changed, sentries should be informed).

(*d*) The position of the road where the examining party is stationed (one road may be selected for this purpose by each picquet or group of picquets and all others considered closed, or the commander of the outposts may decide on keeping only certain roads open, in which case he would inform picquet commanders of his intention, and they would instruct sentries accordingly). He will also explain to each sentry the "Orders of his post," which he must be able to repeat when called upon.

Orders for night sentries.

1. Challenge all parties approaching the post.
2. Allow no unauthorised person to pass through the line of sentries except by the road pointed out.
3. Communicate anything unusual to the commander of the picquet.

The above will be sufficient to ask the men

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Night duties. to commit to memory, but the person posting sentries must further explain to them that one of the two men must remain on the spot where posted, keeping a sharp look-out towards the enemy, the other patrolling between him and the next fixed sentry on the right, and occasionally about 40 paces to the front; the men to relieve each other at patrolling.

Cordon system.

Sentries.

When anything unusual is perceived by a sentry, and is of sufficient importance to be communicated to the officer commanding the picquet, one of the two men will run in to the picquet, rejoining his comrade as soon as possible.

Officers and non-commissioned officers will be careful to see that challenging is correctly carried out as follows *:—

Example of Challenging.

Sentry (on hearing or seeing any one approaching, turns in the direction of the party, and bringing his rifle to the "port," chal-

* As sentries do not fix bayonets on light nights, the author (considering it both ridiculous and dangerous for a sentry to challenge with unfixed bayonet) used to instruct the men to slip on the bayonet immediately before challenging, unfixing again after the party had passed. With a little practice the men did this very smartly.

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lenges in a clear voice). "Halt; Who comes there?"

Answer (party at once halting). "Visiting Rounds" ("Relief" or "Friend," as the case may be).

Sentry (coming down to the "charge"). "Stand, Visiting Rounds; advance one, and give the countersign."

Answer (given in a low tone at the bayonet's point). "Midlothian."

Sentry. "Advance, Visiting Rounds (or "Pass, Friend"); all's well."

Should the party challenged not reply at once, the sentry will challenge a second time in a louder tone; if no answer is returned to the second challenge, the sentry is justified in firing on the party.

Should the party challenged turn out to be Visiting Rounds or Relief, the patrolling sentry will at once rejoin the fixed sentry; the party will then be halted immediately in rear of the sentries, one of whom will turn about and deliver up the orders of the post, the other meanwhile keeping a sharp look-out to the front.

Having ascertained the orders are correct, the officer (or non-commissioned officer) will in the case of "Visiting Rounds" order the sentry who had turned about to "front," and will pass on to the next sentry. In the case of

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Night duties.

Sentries. Visiting rounds and relief.

"Relief" he will give the word "Pass," upon which the sentry who is watching the front will "turn about," and the right file of the relief will step up into the place of the old sentries, who at the same time fall in on the left of the relief, which will then be marched off in the direction of the next sentry.

The formality of porting arms, &c., carried out when the sentries of a guard are relieved or visited, is usually omitted on outpost duty where secrecy is of importance.

On dark nights bayonets are always fixed by sentries, when the rifle is carried at the slope; on moonlight nights bayonets are not fixed, when the rifle will be carried at the trail.

As by day, sentries are usually relieved every two hours, and visited between each relief, the object being to see that they are alert and acquainted with their orders. (On instruction parades, reliefs should be sent out when a G is sounded on the bugle, and visiting rounds about 5 minutes after.)

All parties must be inspected by the officer or non-commissioned officer who is to command them before being marched off.

Position of the picquet.

Having posted his sentries, the officer will next determine the best position for his picquet, which by night should be posted on a road if possible, from 100 to 400 yards in rear of the

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line of sentries, and as centrally situated with regard to them as possible. Night duties.

Position of the picquet.

A strong position capable of defence should be chosen, and if time allows, artificially strengthened.

If some of the sentries are inconveniently distant from the main picquet, the company may be broken up into two or more smaller picquets, or the reliefs of certain sentries (4 men) may be posted under a non-commissioned officer in rear of the sentries they relieve.

Having decided the position of the picquet, the next step will be to tell off the different parties required.

This is done exactly in the same manner as has been already detailed under day duties (p 14.).

The same parties, connecting sentries, &c., are required by night as by day (omitting only the detached party sent to occupy cover), and in addition a reconnoitring patrol of a non-commissioned officer and about 6 men for each road leading in from the front.

Reconnoitring patrols.

These reconnoitring patrols are sent out about 1000 yards down every road leading in the direction of the enemy; they should be preceded by scouts. If considered desirable and sufficient men are available, reliefs can be provided for them, but as doing so would entail

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Night duties.

much marching and fatigue, they are usually ordered to remain out all night, taking every precaution for their own safety. The non-commissioned officer in charge should be a selected man, as the duty is a dangerous one: it should be impressed upon him that as an enemy usually advances to attack by night by the roads, his party would be the first portion of the outposts to become aware of an intended attack; they must therefore (in common with all patrols) guard against causing unnecessary alarm by firing on patrols or small parties of the enemy, but in the event of a real advance must give the alarm by firing volleys as they slowly retire before him. Should the intended attack be abandoned in consequence of its having failed (through the action of these patrols) to be a surprise, the patrol would cautiously resume its former position as the enemy retired—information being sent back to the picquet commander. Before returning in the morning, reconnoitring patrols should ascend the highest ground in their vicinity, and observe and report any change in the enemy's dispositions.

Reconnoitring patrols.

[On ordinary instruction parades these parties should be told off and questioned regarding their duties, but not actually sent out.]

Connecting sentries.

Connecting sentries by night patrol between

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Night duties.

the points they are connecting, instead of remaining stationary as by day.

Regular system of night outposts authorised by the 'Field Exercise.'

The "Cordon" system, as above described, while affording the best *practice* for night outposts, both by employing a larger number of men as sentries, and allowing those not employed to see how the challenging, relieving, patrolling, &c., are carried out is, only applicable in the field under special circumstances, for the following reasons:—

(*a.*) It would entail either the employment of a much larger number of men, or the drawing in of the line of sentries much nearer to the main body than under ordinary circumstances would be advisable.

(*b.*) In a close country intersected by hedges and ditches it would be almost impracticable to establish a regular cordon of sentries.

For these reasons, and to allow of the night outposts being established on very nearly the same front as by day, a modification of the "Cordon" system is authorised by the 'Field Exercise' for use in the English Army. The modification consists simply of employing fewer sentries and more patrols.

Sentries are only posted on the roads, paths, and avenues of approach leading in from the front, while the ground between them is kept by patrols.

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Night duties.

Regular system of night outposts authorised by the 'Field Exercise.'

The details as described for the "Cordon" system apply in every respect, except that the patrolling sentry of each pair (being on a road) would usually patrol about 40 paces to the front, and the same distance to the right, when the ground admits of it.

Also, the sentries being farther from the picquet, it may be convenient to place their reliefs near to them more frequently than with the other system.

A proper service of patrols must also be established and kept continually moving between sentries.*

Supports.

Supports are placed from 300 to 600 yards in rear of the group of picquets with which they are associated. The commander will be careful to select the most suitable position for defence—by night, if possible, on a main road; he will acquaint the picquet commander with the exact position chosen, and place a sentry (single) over the arms and single connecting sentries between it and the picquets in front and the

* Although but little has been written under the heading "Regular System of Night Outposts," for the simple reason that all the necessary details had been already described under the heading "Cordon System," the author would impress upon all that the former is the system authorised by the 'Field Exercise,' and should be practised to the exclusion of the other, when once the details of challenging, relieving, &c., are mastered.

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support next on the right: these sentries will patrol backwards and forwards between the points they connect. The commander will be careful to communicate the countersign to the whole of the men before any are detached. The sentries challenge exactly as described for picquet sentries. Having told off the necessary reliefs for his sentries, and also for visiting rounds, the commander can allow the support to pile arms and fall out.

Night duties. Supports.

It should be borne in mind that while a single sentry is almost powerless against a night attack, a picquet reinforced by its sentries and outlying parties can offer considerable resistance.

Night attack.

When, therefore, a night attack is made upon outposts, sentries, patrols, &c., should fall back on their picquet, the commander of which, after sending word to the support, will delay the enemy's advance by offering such resistance as he is able, and then fall back slowly on the support, when considerable resistance should be offered, and time gained to allow the commander of the outposts to make such arrangements for meeting the attack as he may consider necessary.

Commanders of picquets and supports should arrange for concerted action beforehand, and they must recollect that their knowledge of the

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Night duties. Night attack. ground acquired during daylight gives them an immense advantage over the enemy; also that the darkness compels him to advance in a close formation, consequently the greatest loss and confusion can be caused by firing volleys and delivering frequent bayonet charges into the head of the advancing columns.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES FOR OFFICERS.

Sentries should be made acquainted with names of the places to which roads on which they may be posted lead.

Vigilance, circumspection and silence must be impressed upon all ranks, particularly when employed on patrolling duty.

Whenever the officer commanding a picquet leaves it, to accompany a patrol or for any purpose, he is to inform the next senior of his intention.

Mounted orderlies should be attached, when available, to picquets, supports and reserve, for the purpose of carrying messages and orders, but the establishment of a well-organised system of visual signalling must never be omitted in the field. All messages to be sent by signal must be in writing.

Picquets should be numbered from the right to prevent confusion, and the number of the picquet communicated to the men.

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Picquets in a wood are placed nearer than usual to their sentries, who are posted out of sight along the edges.

The modifications required from day to night duties should be carried out at dusk, but before dark.

Picquets get under arms an hour before daylight, and as soon as objects can be discerned the commander will proceed to occupy the same posts that he held the day before under cover of patrols cautiously sent forward to feel the way.

By relieving picquets about daybreak a desirable reinforcement is obtained at the time when attacks are usually made. The officer commanding the old picquet will accompany the commander of the new picquet round the chain of posts and point out anything important.

Should firing be heard in front before troops that have been relieved on outpost duty reach camp, they will immediately return to the front.

Officers on outpost duty should be provided with field-glass, compass, map, and memorandum book.

An officer should write down all verbal messages received, also anything special that may have occurred to him or information obtained, for the information of the officer who relieves him. All reports and information of importance to be sent at once to the officer commanding the outposts.

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No compliments are paid by troops on outpost duty, but picquets and supports should "stand to" their arms on the approach of the commander of the outposts or officers of superior rank to him.

The rallying post of a picquet when fires are allowed should be in rear of the fire.

On the approach of a flag of truce, one sentry will advance, and halt it at such distance as will prevent any of the party who compose it from overlooking the picquet posts. The other sentry will report to the non-commissioned officer in charge of the examining party, who will send word to the picquet commander. The latter, if the flag of truce is merely the bearer of a letter or parcel, will give a receipt and require it to depart forthwith.

Should their mission be more important, the picquet commander will, according to the instructions he has received on this head, either detain the flag of truce at the outposts and send for the commander of outposts, or forward the flag of truce to him under escort and blindfolded. In either case none of the picquet are to be permitted to converse with the party.

Deserters and spies should be sent in under escort to the commander of the outposts at once without being questioned.

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO TROOPS ON OUTPOST DUTY.

No compliments.

Perfect silence.

No one to absent himself without permission.

No fire to be lighted, or smoking, without permission.

Picquets to be always on the alert.

No bugle call, except the "Alarm."

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENTRIES.

Sentries *see* by day and *hear* by night.

When certain that the enemy is advancing, at once fire to alarm those in rear, and send in your comrade with particulars to the picquet.

Always carry the rifle at the trail, except when bayonets are fixed.

Day sentries do not challenge any one of their own side.

They conceal themselves from view of the enemy as far as possible, and always keep a sharp look-out.

They do not patrol, or alter the position they may have adopted for better concealment on the approach of general or other officers.

They never fix bayonets unless to despatch an enemy.

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Night sentries only fix bayonets on dark nights (or, if specially ordered, before challenging, in which case they unfix as soon as the party challenged has been "passed").

When a regular cordon of sentries is established, one man of each pair will by night patrol sufficiently in the direction of the next fixed sentry on the right to keep up communication, and occasionally about 40 paces to the front.

When sentries are only posted on the roads leading in to a position, one of the pair will by night patrol about 40 paces to the front (*i.e.*, down the road), and occasionally the same distance to the right if the ground permits.

The two men of a double sentry relieve each other at patrolling; the one not patrolling marking the situation of the post.

Sentries must remember that upon their vigilance depend their lives and those of their comrades.

The following are the usual orders to be given over on relief or visit of rounds :—

Day sentries.

1. Allow no unauthorised person to pass through the line of sentries except by the roads pointed out.
2. Communicate anything unusual to the commander of the picquet.

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Night sentries.

1. Challenge all parties approaching the post.
2. Allow no unauthorised person to pass through the line of sentries, except by the roads pointed out.
3. Communicate anything unusual to the commander of the picquet.

EXAMPLE OF CHALLENGING FOR GUIDANCE OF NIGHT SENTRIES.

Sentry (on hearing or seeing any one approaching, turns in the direction of the party, and bringing his rifle to the "port," challenges in a clear voice). "Halt; Who comes there?"

Answer (party at once halting). "Visiting Rounds" ("Relief" or "Friend," as the case may be).

Sentry (coming down to the charge). "Stand, Visiting Rounds; advance one, and give the countersign."

Answer (given in a low tone at the bayonet's point). "Midlothian."

Sentry. "Advance, Visiting Rounds; all's well."

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